

Leaves of Absence

A graduate student can request a leave of absence (LOA) for any reason they deem appropriate. A graduate student may request a LOA from their program through a written statement to their program director who will forward the request to the Associate Dean for Graduate Education for processing. An LOA must be requested and approved before or during the first term of leave. A request for a retroactive LOA will not be approved. The Associate Dean for Graduate Education – in conjunction with the relevant Program – will establish any conditions that apply to the leave. A graduate student on a LOA will not be supported by VCU funds or funds arranged by VCU.

An approved LOA does **NOT** remove a graduate student from courses in which they are enrolled. Graduate students should therefore withdraw or drop from all courses in which they are enrolled in addition to requesting a LOA. Graduate students should consult Student Accounting and the Office of Financial Aid to understand the potential implications of a LOA, drop from courses or withdrawal from courses for their financial responsibilities and future financial aid.

Graduate students with an approved LOA are exempt from continuous enrollment requirements for the LOA period. Although a LOA temporarily suspends the requirement for continuous enrollment, time on a LOA counts toward the total time allowed to complete a degree.

The LOA prevents registration for the approved LOA period. If a graduate student wishes to extend the approved LOA period or return to academic study before the end of the approved LOA period, they should notify their Graduate Program Director to request that the LOA be altered.

If there is a delay in returning beyond the approved LOA without approval from the Program and the Associate Dean for Graduate Education, the student may be required to reapply for admission.

Reinstatement Process: When appropriate, the Associate Dean for Graduate Education or the relevant Program may establish specific requirements for reinstatement to prepare the student for a successful return to the university. Examples include, but are not limited to asking the student to complete preapproved course work at an outside institution to demonstrate readiness to return to rigorous academic work, or to participate in and successfully complete a reinstatement consultation with their healthcare provider, Division for Academic Success, University Student Health Services, or University Counseling Services. The student will be eligible to re-enroll the semester following the end of the approved LOA provided all required conditions are satisfied.

Adapted from the VCU Bulletin. Students should see the VCU Bulletin for additional information.

Approved by the School of Medicine Graduate Programs Committee: 2024.01